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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JERUSALEM 000638

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/11/2018  
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)  
SUBJECT: HEBRON AREA MAYORS BLAME UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY  
ON THE SEPARATION BARRIER AND OBSTACLES TO MOVEMENT

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) Summary. Al-Dhahariyeh Mayor Sami Ishneiwer and Ithna Mayor Jamal Itmeizi told Poloffs April 9 that residents face high unemployment and poverty due to the separation barrier and IDF road closures that cut off their towns from Israel and Hebron. The mayors said their towns suffer from a lack of water, overburdened schools, and poor sewage systems. Mayor Itmeizi said Ithna, located in Area B, has no police force and residents face the threat of home demolitions End Summary.

Al-Dhahariyeh: High Unemployment  
and Poverty; Cut off from Hebron  
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12. (C) Al-Dhahariyeh mayor Sami Ishneiwer told Poloffs April 9 that al-Dhahariyeh has 31,000 residents, and an additional 9,000 from surrounding villages depend on the town's services. He said al-Dhahariyeh municipality, located 28 kilometers southwest of Hebron, encompasses 15,196 dunams (3,799 acres) of land, but residents own approximately 167,000 dunams (41,750 acres) in the area. The restricted size of their municipality prohibits legal construction by residents on much of their land. According to Ishneiwer, the municipality suffers from a lack of water, overburdened schools (serving 8,000 students), and a poor sewage system. He added that Hebron's sewage system runs exposed through al-Dhahariyeh. Ishneiwer said unemployment is high, and 57 percent of residents live below the poverty line. He blamed the municipality's economic difficulties on the separation barrier and IDF road closures that essentially cut off al-Dhahariyeh from Israel and Hebron.

13. (C) Ishneiwer said 35 percent of residents used to work in the Israeli city of Be'er Sheva, but can no longer do so because of the separation barrier and a lack of GOI permits. The Mayor said life is difficult for al-Dhahariyeh's many residents who are married to Israeli Arabs in the Be'er Sheva area. He said Arab Israelis previously shopped in al-Dhahariyeh, but since the barrier's construction, they have stopped, and some 400 businesses have closed. Council members said the lack of access to Israel hurts them more economically than the restrictions on access to Hebron. However, Hebron has al-Dhahariyeh's closest hospital. Though only 28 kilometers away, because the IDF closed access to Route 60 from the town, a trip to Hebron now takes ninety minutes on secondary roads through nearby villages.

Ithna Council Reaches Out to Residents  
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14. (C) Mayor of Ithna Jamal Itmeizi told Poloffs April 9 that the Ithna local council had developed a committee to

improve council members' relations with Ithna residents and to identify residents' needs for the council. (Note: Ithna is located roughly 12 kilometers west of Hebron. The Ithna local council has thirteen Fatah members. End Note) "I'm proud of this committee," Itmeizi said, "because it includes women, youth, and all the clans of Ithna." He said service delivery has improved since the committee was developed, but "We still have a long way to go before reaching a high standard of providing services to the public" and singled out schools, roads, and the health clinic as needing improvements. Ithna municipal council member Amal Abu Asaad said she regularly encourages the town's female residents to attend open council meetings.

Ithna: Impacted by Barrier and Area B  
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15. (C) Itmeizi said the IDF has expropriated 4,000 dunams (1,000 acres) of Ithna's land to construct the separation barrier, and the municipality now lies on 6,000 dunams (1,500 acres) of land. The loss of land, said Itmeizi, is a problem for Ithna's growing population and blocks needed, natural expansion. He said many farmers cannot access their lands beyond the separation barrier and blamed the barrier for the village's 45 percent unemployment.

16. (C) Itmeizi also said a nine year old agreement between the Palestinian Water Authority and Israeli water company Makarot to give Ithna access to Kiryat Arba's water line has never been implemented. He said residents need 2,000 to 2,500 cubic meters of water per day, but receive only 800 to 1,000 cubic meters from Makarot. This lack of water adds to local health, agriculture, and livestock grazing problems.

17. (C) Ithna is in Area B, and according to Itmeizi the IDF  
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has demolished some 50 homes in area over the last decade for lacking building permits. He said that PA security forces cannot access Ithna because they must cross through Area C, where the GOI has civil and security control. Itmeizi said without a police force, Ithna residents believe they are not subject to the rule of law. In many cases, he added, local clans and council members step in to resolve problems.

Positive Press Coverage  
of ConGen Village Outreach  
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18. (U) Poloffs' visit to al-Dhahariyeh received positive press coverage in Al Ayyam and Al Quds dailies. The articles focused on U.S. interest in local problems as well as U.S. support for a local project that is a follow-on to a MEPI funded project to support female community leaders. Municipal council representative Samira Abu Sharekh was quoted saying that U.S. support for the project would be of great importance to local women.  
WALLES